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Marywood program combats sexual violence

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Body

April 14--'Release Light' in 10th year

Group backs sex assault awareness

At the 10th "Release the Light" sexual assault awareness program at Marywood University on Wednesday, 40 marchers marked their path with a line of red flags and shared their message with the campus community through signs and shouts.

"Join together! Free our lives! We will not be victimized!"

In a decade, the annual program has broadened from a support and awareness event inspired by sexual assault victims to an everyday effort to stop sexual and relationship violence, Barbara Decker, associate director of Marywood's counseling center, said.

The program Wednesday began with an acute reminder of the need to address relationship violence: friends and family gathered to plant a tree in memory of Marywood graduate student Caitlin McGuire, who was killed in February by her boyfriend, a part-time Pittston Twp. police officer, in an apparent murder-suicide.

Money raised Wednesday in honor of Ms. McGuire will go to a new campus Relationship Awareness and Empowerment Task Force, which seeks to spread information about healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Mandy Doria, a University of Scranton graduate student and an intern in Marywood's counseling center, said the information, resources and support offered through the program on Wednesday are only an introduction to the help available on campus year-round.

"We're hoping all the students that pass by will see all the resources for them," she said as she printed her name on a cloth banner with a dove and a pledge against sexual assault.

Former Scranton Police Chief David Elliott encouraged women to report cases of domestic and sexual violence and discussed what to expect from the police in response to a report.

"A lot of females feel ashamed and embarrassed to report it," said Mr. Elliott, now Marywood's senior director for university safety, security and environmental compliance.

"It's not their fault. Nobody has the right to commit these kinds of acts."

Contact the writer: llegere@timeshamrock.com

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